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UNCLAS MANILA 004971

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP, DS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: ANTI-ARROYO RALLY SPONSORED BY LEFT DRAWS 10,000
IN MANILA

REF: A. MANILA 4934

[B](#). MANILA 4875

[C](#). MANILA 3397

[D](#). MANILA 3231

[1](#)1. (U) This message is Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: About 10,000 leftist anti-President Arroyo protesters convened at a site near Malacanang Palace on October 21. In scuffles with police, several people were injured. This latest rally is part of a long string of anti-Arroyo protests going back several months. The Armed Forces chief has decided against traveling to PACOM this weekend in light of the "situation," but there are no indications that it will worsen significantly. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (U) Approximately 10,000 mainly leftist protesters gathered near the Mendiola bridge in the vicinity of Malacanang Palace in Manila on October 21 to demand the resignation of President Arroyo. The rally was led by left-wing party list representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casino, and Lisa Masa. By mid-morning, demonstrators from southern and central Luzon and from Metro Manila faced off against police in a tense, hostile atmosphere. The group had obtained a permit to hold a rally at Plaza Miranda (a well-known protest site) but instead marched on the Mendiola Bridge, the scene of a clash between protesters and police on October 14. The Philippine National Police (PNP), in keeping with the President's "Calibrated Premeditated Response" (CPR) policy (Ref A), denied the protesters access to areas near Malacanang where they had no permit to gather. A small group unsuccessfully tried to break through the police cordon, leaving at least four protesters and one policeman injured. In a separate incident, protesters assembling for the rally in Quezon City reportedly roughed up a man they claimed was a military intelligence infiltrator before police on the scene rescued him.

[1](#)4. (U) Poloff on the margins of the scene reported that, as of 4:00 PM local time, the crowd had diminished to fewer than 4,000 persons and that the mood had become somewhat calmer. Most of the demonstrators had withdrawn to the approved rally area at Plaza Miranda, where leftist politicians gave speeches and activists performed street theater. The police, who had called for reinforcements earlier in the day, including three fire trucks, claimed to have sufficient forces in place to keep the situation under control and to protect Malacanang.

[1](#)5. (SBU) The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, General Generosa Senga, on October 21 informed Embassy and PACOM that he would not after all attend the Chiefs of Defense conference at PACOM next week, citing "the situation." His staff clarified that President Arroyo had approved his travel this weekend and had not/not requested that he change these plans.

[1](#)6. (SBU) Comment: This latest rally is part of a long string of anti-Arroyo protests going back several months. While not the largest, it was again highlighted the continued bad blood between Malacanang and its opponents. Despite General Senga's caution, there are no indications that the situation will become more tense or worsen significantly. End Comment.
JONES